LAST CIO CONVENTION?

—John C. Cort

THE

Commonweal

The Dissolution of Liberalism

by Russell Kirk

Walt Whitman at Home

by Seymour Krim

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Editor
EDWARD S. SKILLIN

Managing Editor
JAMES O'GARA

Associate Editors
WILLIAM P. CLANCY, WILLIAM PFAFF

Contributing Editors:
PHILIP BURNHAM
JOHN C. CORT
ANNE FREMANTLE
PHILIP T. HARTUNG
RICHARD HAYES

JOHN BRUBAKER: *Advertising Manager*

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THE
Commonweal
week by week

THE COURSE AHEAD

EVER since the Congressional elections, it has become increasingly obvious that President Eisenhower is in better shape politically than he was during his first two years in office. He has given up his recurrent efforts to do business with the radicals of the right in his own party. Better late than never, he has apparently realized the distance between his position and theirs, and he has clearly indicated that they can go his way or go it alone.

But if Mr. Eisenhower has since the election been enjoying the air of political freedom, released as he was from his partisan prison, his course in foreign affairs is not all going to be smooth sailing, by any means. Recent news about the proposed plan for aid to Asia and about manpower requests for the armed forces illustrate two aspects of a major Administration weakness.

The notion of an Administration-sponsored Marshall Plan for Asia was first advanced some weeks ago. For our part, we were enthusiastic, commenting: "In this latest development the Administration is showing the kind of imagination and foresight that is essential if the West is to win the battle for the uncommitted peoples of Asia." Similar opinions were widely expressed elsewhere in responsible circles. The general feeling at the time was that the Asia plan marked a historic shift in Administration foreign policy; it was seen as an important step in winning a war that cannot be won only with military weapons.

Nothing that has happened since that time has changed either the situation or our views. Yet reports from Washington now indicate that if the plan for aid to Asia was an Administration trial balloon, it has been shot down. And apparently it has been shot down, not by sources outside the Eisenhower team, but by the Administration itself.

The Soviet Union and Communist China are wooing Asia with their own Marxist version of the Marshall Plan. Tractors and other agricultural equipment, industrial machinery, credit and favorable trade agreements—the Communists are using all these things to sway Asian sentiment toward the Soviet bloc and away from the United States. Here at home, the most enthusiastic proponent of the plan to aid Asia never talked in terms of more than five billion dollars a year—a small fraction of our expenditures for arms. Yet now Administration spokesmen are busy throwing cold water on the whole idea, and the reports are that Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey will win out in his desire to eliminate such expenditures from the budget. Thus what a few weeks ago looked like a promising bit of long-range planning by the Administration seems to have been dealt a mortal wound by the budget-balancers.

MUCH the same cash-register spirit seems to prevail in the Administration's newly announced plan for a further manpower reduction in the armed forces. Secretary Wilson left reporters with the distinct impression that the reductions were based on an improved outlook for world peace. Then Mr. Dulles stepped hastily into the Wilson-created breach. Not so, he said in effect; all that is involved is a shift in expenditures, due to the increased effectiveness of the new atomic weapons and consequent reduction in the need for ground forces.

Of the two explanations, that of Mr. Dulles is certainly preferable. Even accepting that interpretation, serious doubts do exist about the wisdom of this decision.

Paradoxically enough, one of the weak spots in the Administration seems to be the efficiency and force of the Secretary of the Treasury. The very able Mr. Humphrey is intent on balancing the budget and cutting taxes, and apparently no one of equal stature and ability is around to make the case for such imaginative but expensive plans as aid for Asia and the development of a larger, more mobile ground force.

Rightly or wrongly, the impression certainly prevails that the spirit of Mr. Humphrey broods

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over most of the Administration decisions to reduce the armed forces and to curb economic aid for our allies. But whatever the reasons behind these decisions, we think it would be a serious mistake for the Administration to adopt such a limited view as official policy. Bold and creative measures along new political and economic lines are essential if most of Asia is not to be absorbed into the Soviet sphere. And although the principal military threat for some time may come from internal subversion in areas like South Viet Nam, we fear the time may come when the nation will regret any further reduction in the armed forces which, in view of our responsibilities and world commitments, are already spread very thin.

War, the old saying has it, is too important to be left to the generals. What is at stake now is peace, which can only be achieved by strength and determination. And peace is too important to be entrusted solely to the mercies of the budget-balancers.

ATTACKING TRADE BARRIERS

ONE of the initiatives open to America, good in itself and effective in the cold war, is to strike out boldly against the barriers that are holding back world trade and higher living standards. This has long been an aim of President Eisenhower and some of his principal advisers, but the 83rd Congress stood in the way. It blocked several key Administration measures, such as the further simplifying of customs procedures, Presidential authority to cut tariffs up to five per cent per year on certain items under the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act and extension of that Act for the full three-year term. The 83rd also failed to complete legislation that would stimulate American business investment abroad through tax reductions.

The Democratic leadership in the new Congress will therefore have unusual opportunities. A three-year extension of the Reciprocal Trade program is soon to be proposed under bipartisan auspices. The Democrats will have other important chances to carry out their pledge of cooperation in these matters. It will be well if they do, as regional and local opposition to reducing tariffs is well organized and prepared to do battle. Happily there is a strong impression that Americans in general now favor lower duties on goods from other lands.

NEXT WEEK

SHAO CHUAN LENG writes about neutralism among non-Communist Asian nations:

"In pro-American countries like Japan, the efforts of Peking are directed towards promoting a neutralist sentiment as an initial step to eliminate American influence. Toward the members of the 'neutral bloc,' Peking is trying the line of persuasion not only that they refuse cooperation with Washington but that they take a further step in joining the 'peace' camp. In pursuit of this tactical line, the Chinese propagandists have a variety of techniques at their disposal—techniques which include radio broadcasts, cheap books, pamphlets, newspapers, conferences, exchange missions, and the like. They also are skillfully concentrating their propaganda on such attractive themes as non-interference in internal affairs, world peace, Asian solidarity, American 'imperialism,' and the achievements of the 'New China.' "

PRECARIOUS BALANCE

THE menace of Communism and the dry rot resulting from egoistic materialism have often been singled out as reasons for the disoriented and demoralized modern temper. Yet materialism in its various forms cannot fully account for present debilities—even when coupled with knowledge of the appalling destructiveness of dually held thermonuclear weapons, or the agnosticism which afflicts many contemporaries. All of these together fail to explain man's present plight.

Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, in the remarkable address which closed the imposing year-long bicentennial celebration of Columbia University effectively brought forward certain additional reasons:

"For the truth is that this is indeed inevitably and increasingly an open, and inevitably and increasingly an eclectic, world. We know too much for one man to know much, we live too variously to live as one. Our histories and traditions—the very means of interpreting life—are both bonds and barriers among us. Our knowledge separates as well as it unites; our orders disintegrate as well as bind; our art brings us together and sets us apart.

". . . . Never before today has the integrity of the intimate, the detailed, the true art, the integrity of craftsmanship and the preservation of what is familiar, humorous and beautiful stood in more massive contrast to the vastness of life, the greatness of the globe, the otherness of people, the otherness of ways and the all-encompassing dark. . . . This balance—this perpetual, precarious, impossible balance between the infinitely open and the intimate, this time—our twentieth century—has

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been long in coming; but it has come. It is, I think, for us and our children, the only way.

". . . . This cannot be an easy life. We shall have a rugged time of it to keep our minds open and to keep them deep, to keep our sense of beauty and our ability to make it, and our occasional ability to see it, in places remote and strange and unfamiliar; we shall have a rugged time of it, all of us, in keeping these gardens in our villages, in keeping open the manifold, intricate, casual paths, to keep these flourishing in a great open windy world; but this is, as I see it, the condition of man; and in this condition we can help, because we can love one another."

INDOCHINA

LESS than two years remain before elections are to be held in partitioned Indochina. No one questions that if those elections were held in the next six months, all of Indochina would by majority-vote choose to march through the bamboo gate into the great silence; and that would be the end of Indochina.

Whether the elections will actually be held is problematical. If by astonishing energy and enterprise the South were to be put on its feet at the same time that the Communist Viet Minh did something extraordinarily stupid or cruel, and as a result there was a real chance of Communism's being rejected in a free election, the Communists would undoubtedly do all in their power to bar elections in the North. To the Communists, partition is preferable to rejection, as they have demonstrated in Korea and Germany. And if, on the other hand, the Communists gain in the next six months as they have gained in the months since the truce, any election would be empty motion.

The Indochina affair, this really classic example of bungling on a magnificent scale, would then have reached a fitting climax and that which would mark the accomplishment would be the several thousand graves of Vietnamese anti-Communists, Vietnamese refugees, and the North African, German, Central European and French professional soldiers of the army and foreign legion of the Republic of France. Graves, and the ranks of Indochinese children bearing peace posters as they marched past the reviewing stands.

The reporters who visit Indochina these days tell of a Saigon characterized by selfishness and vice; a half a dozen competing private and public armies, some controlled by gangsters, deriving their funds from organized gambling and prostitution; a government of a few incorruptibles who possess extremely insecure means for controlling the state.

One reporter, Joseph Alsop, spent some time in an area under the control of the Communist Viet Minh. From his report it is clear that the Viet Minh is in the primary stage of the Communist cycle: the officials and their organizations are fanatically dedicated, high-minded and puritanical. Many of the leaders are men who gave up business and professional prestige and security to go underground with the "resistance" of Ho Chi Minh. They are bringing the peasants what appears to be self-determination and enduring justice.

Against them stands the Ngo Dinh Diem government and the American missions headed by Generals O'Daniel and Collins. They have at best a small chance of pulling success out of the wreckage. But their plans are solid: resettlement of the refugees, then the reorganization (and, the Americans recommend, reduction) of the Vietnamese army along the lines of the ROK army. The new force would be supplemented by a rural constabulary patterned after that of the Philippines. These troops would be joined by civilian administrators and technical and agricultural personnel in extending the South Vietnamese government machinery over that considerable area which, while geographically in the southern sector, has been left to the colonization of the Viet Minh cadres.

If the dedication of Premier Diem and the anti-Communist, anti-colonial men who are with him can be imparted to these administrative teams, the countryside might be swayed to the anti-Communist side. And if the time remaining before the elections is sufficient for the rigidity and cruelty of the Communist system to show themselves, then the peasants might be disillusioned with the North—as were those Buddhist and Catholic villagers who last summer stayed behind.

The only factors in the whole Indochina situation which are favorable to the West are that the Diem government is honest and sincere—and that the United States is wholeheartedly behind it. We are not throwing this opportunity away untried. It is just that the opportunity itself is so very small.

By December 27, with Christmas gift subscriptions still coming in, the number of new subscriptions needed to reach the Thirtieth Anniversary year goal had been reduced to 1,588. Special Christmas rates remain in force until January 15. A coupon handy for entering a gift subscription for a friend or a library (which The Commonweal would be glad to designate) may be found on page 391.

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The Dissolution of Liberalism

"IT IS EXPIRING UNDER OUR VERY EYES FOR LACK OF THE HIGHER IMAGINATION"

RUSSELL KIRK

ALL great systems, ethical or political, attain their ascendancy over the minds of men by virtue of their appeal to the imagination; and when they cease to touch the chords of wonder and mystery and hope, their power is lost, and men look elsewhere for some set of principles by which they may be guided.

We live by myth. "Myth" is not falsehood; on the contrary, the great and ancient myths are profoundly true. The myth of Prometheus will always be a high poetic representation of an ineluctable truth, and so will the myth of Pandora. A myth may grow out of an actual event almost lost in the remote past, but it comes to transcend the particular circumstances of its origin, assuming a significance universal and abiding.

Nor is a myth simply a work of fancy: true myth is only represented, never created, by a poet. Prometheus and Pandora were not invented by the solitary imagination of Hesiod. Real myths are the product of the moral experience of a people, groping toward divine love and wisdom—implanted in a people's consciousness, before the dawn of history, by a power and a means we never have been able to describe in terms of mundane knowledge.

A recent writer in *Partisan Review,* expatiating upon a concept of Thomas Mann's, endeavored to argue that all myths are deceptive and dangerous, because a hypothetical "myth" created out of whole cloth by a Mann character was deceptive and dangerous. The trouble with this notion is that true myth cannot be invented by Thomas Mann's character, or by Thomas Mann, or by anyone else. All that the poet or projector can create is romance, fiction, a work of fancy.

A "myth" got up by a single ingenious romancer to suit his ends is no real myth at all. One might as well argue that all the books of the Bible are so many hoaxes because Joseph Smith turned up the Book of Mormon under rather curious circumstances. The fallacy in this contention is that the Book of Mormon is not part of the Bible.

Just so the "myths" of Nietzsche, or of Mann, are not really myths at all; they are not the collective expression of a people's moral experience, but only the fancies of ingenious individuals. Myth, properly understood, is not a delusion or a hoax: it is an expression of wisdom transcending the private reason.

I repeat that no great ethical or political movement comes to master the minds of men without some sanction of myth. The quality and power of that myth may vary, and the particular system may represent myth badly or deliberately distort it, but the rudiment of myth must be there. So it has been even with the system of thought called liberalism, which came into being early in the nineteenth century, and is now fading out of the world. As great ethical and political systems go, liberalism has been short-lived. And I believe that the ephemeral character of the liberal movement is in consequence of the fact that liberalism's mythical roots always were feeble, and now are nearly dead. Liberalism is expiring under our very eyes for lack of the higher imagination.

MR. Christopher Dawson recently described the origins and historical weaknesses of liberalism better than I can; yet I venture to suggest that the power of liberalism, so far as it came to influence the masses of men, came from a kind of residual store of myth, however much doctrinaire liberals might disavow myth in general. The arch-liberal, Jeremy Bentham, was contemptuously hostile to all myth, and yet the liberal parties of the past century and a half attained political power through an implicit appeal to a myth of strong popular appeal, however misunderstood or distorted. That myth is what Lord Percy of Newcastle calls "the heresy of democracy"—literally a heresy, the belief that political power and political wisdom emanate from an abstract People, rather than from divine Providence.

Orestes Brownson, more than a century ago, penetratingly exposed this fallacy in liberalism, and went on to describe socialism as a "Christian heresy"—and that in the very year of the Communist Manifesto. (He is echoed nowadays by Professor Toynbee and

Mr. Kirk is the author of The Conservative Mind and A Program for Conservatives.

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a great many others.) Liberalism, in short, found its popular support in myth, but in myth distorted: the myth of individual free will, but a free will stripped of divine guidance and of grace; the myth of popular sovereignty, but a myth deprived of the saving phrase "under God"; the myth of natural rights, but a myth shorn of the Providential order which gives such rights their sanction.

The liberal system attained popularity because it promised progress without the onerous duties exacted by tradition and religion. It is now in the process of dissolution because, founded on an imperfect and distorted myth, it has been unable to fulfill its promise, and because it no longer appeals in any degree to the higher imagination. It has been undone by social disillusion. Before long, no one will be able to take shelter under the ruinous fabric of liberalism. I see three alternatives to the liberal system: some iron discipline like that of Communism, founded upon a gross heresy from Christian principle; some Machiavellian scheme founded upon self-interest and creature-comforts; or a reinvigorated adherence to religious doctrine and traditional rights, which system we call, in politics, "conservatism."

THE abstract system called liberalism has brought into disrepute the good old word "liberal," which nowadays retains its original meaning almost solely in conjunction with "education"; and liberal education, we all know, has harder sledding every year that passes. "Liberal," properly understood, means those qualities possessed by truly free men, cognizant of their rights and their corresponding duties. It often implied, once upon a time, a far-ranging tolerance—but a tolerance based upon firm belief in enduring principles.

It was in this sense that Burke praised "a liberal understanding." It was in this sense that Newman took up the cause of liberal education against the Utilitarians. But Liberalism as a secular dogmatism, as a presumptuous system with an overweening confidence in Rationality, early became a force hostile to the liberality of mind that was Burke's and Newman's.

It is significant that the Utilitarian educational zealots against whom Newman contended were the leaders of English liberalism. Newman first heard the word "liberalism" in connection with the opinions of Byron and his admirers. "Afterwards," Newman writes, "Liberalism was the badge of a theological school, not very dangerous in itself, though dangerous as opening the door to evils which it did not itself either anticipate or comprehend. At present it is nothing else than that deep, plausible skepticism, . . . the development of human reason, as practically exercised by the natural man."

I have written that liberalism is founded upon a distortion of the myth of free will. Free will is mythical; it is also true. All evidence is against it, and all necessity for it. The story of the Fall is the myth of the terrible and yet liberating reality of free will. The historical narrative of the Coming is the completion of that myth. I repeat that myths may be in history, though they transcend history. Well, the great and true myth of free will was distorted by the school of liberalism into the cult of the omnicompetence of private judgment.

The doctrinaire liberal, from the beginning, repudiated authority, tradition, and the wisdom of our ancestors, intending to supplant these checks upon the natural man by Rationality with a capital R. Enlightened self-interest, the English and Continental liberals assumed, joined to an all-sufficing enlightened private rationality, henceforth would emancipate mankind from obedience to tradition, authority, and the past experience of humanity. This assumption led the liberals into a deadly sin, pride of spirit, the arrogant rationality of the man who believes he has the right to judge all things in heaven and earth according to his petty private taste. It led to the absurdity of Utilitarian moral calculus, the pleasure-pain equation. Bentham, the enemy of myth, himself carried the myth of free will to absurdity by making the individual the arbiter of all things and all actions.

As the liberal ideology (for it has been an ideology —that is, a body of secular political dogmas) took form, in England and the Continent and to a lesser extent in America, it became clear that its disciples accepted certain postulates almost on faith. One of these was the idea of Progress—the notion that mankind, through its own efforts, is getting better and better, so that the Present is infinitely superior to any other age in history, and the Future will be better still, so long as private judgment and enlightened self-interest are allowed to prevail over tradition and authority. Another was an affection for Change on principle, and a detestation of Permanence—a craving for novelty. A third was the exaltation of Selfishness into a virtue —that is, a spiritual atomism, a world in which community should be discarded in favor of a thoroughgoing individualism. A fourth was the enthusiasm for Liberty, political and private opportunity to undo all things established and make the world anew, without much respect for two principles which Christian thinkers always had made coordinate with reasoned liberty, Justice and Order.

IN the states of Europe, the struggle between this liberalism and the Christian concept of society was undisguised. There the religious liberal was an anomaly, particularly after 1830. "Liberalism" meant detestation of the Church, usually hostility toward orthodox

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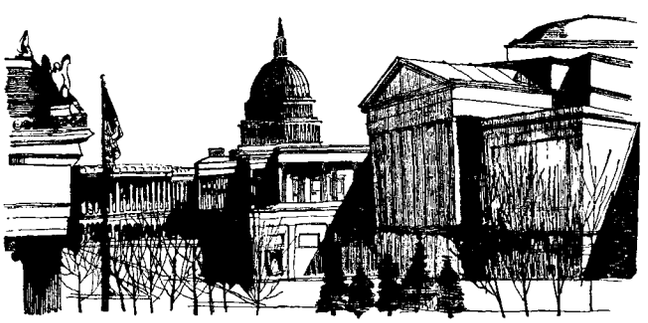
Christianity, and often a repudiation of religion in any form.

In England and America, because of peculiar circumstances, this inimicality was not so easily distinguished. Since the English Liberals took up the cause of the removal of religious disabilities against the defenders of the Anglican establishment, the bulk of Catholics and Noncomformists voted as Liberals, down to the times of Joseph Chamberlain and Stanley Baldwin, however little they might subscribe to the kernel of the liberal ideology. In the United States, though "liberalism" did not become a term of commendation until well within the present century, what are now looked upon as "liberal" causes were often supported by religious persons because they found it expedient, as in Britain, to make common cause with secularists whose immediate aims happened to coincide with theirs.

Brownson remarked in his day the impulse of American Catholics to side with radicals in politics because of a prejudice, acquired in Ireland or Europe, against established political institutions very unlike the constitutional structure of the United States. Besides, the "conservative" and "liberal" lines never were well defined in this country, and the popular confusion over the definition of either term persists down to the present time.

Now it appears to me that twentieth-century collectivism is in part a reaction against doctrinaire liberalism, and in part the natural consequence of that system of thought. The spiritual isolation and the decay of a sense of community which accompanied the triumph of liberalism cannot be endured long by any people. Love lacking, compulsion is employed to hold



society together. And the materialism of the Marxist is only the logical culmination of the materialism of the doctrinaire liberal.

Once the insufficiency of private judgment to govern either society or character was revealed by the terrible events of this century, the body of liberal opinion began to break up, some going on to collectivism, others seeking to return to something like conservative values. The representative twentieth-century liberal, as Santayana observes, has given up the idea of liberation; the only tie which he would loosen is the marriage-bond. Having come full cycle, the liberal now, with Mayor Clark of Philadelphia, is a devotee of the centralized state and the regulated society. He does not talk of Liberty or Justice or Order: he talks of Security. (I was surprised, recently, when Mr. William V. Shannon, writing in The Commonweal, maintained that American conservatives are fascinated by the delusion of stability. Surely stability, security, guaranteed welfare, and the like, are now the idols of the American liberal.)

UNTIL this century, nearly every American statesman desired to be thought a conservative: Calhoun did, and so did Lincoln. Mr. Colin Clark, in a recent number of *Encounter,* remarks the rather curious recent vogue of the word in this country. The American vaguely discontented with the shape of society, as Mr. Clark suggests, took for his model what he imagined English liberalism to be, although English liberalism already was far gone in decay: he imagined that it was some sort of the-middle-way policy, happily splitting the difference between individualism and collectivism.

Thus amorphous in its beginning, twentieth-century American liberalism has become almost impossible to describe, embracing a curious congeries of people all the way from rigid Manchesterians to the editors of the *Nation.* The dominant element among them, however, is now constituted by the devotees of the planned society, perceived at their frankest in R. G. Tugwell and Harry Hopkins: persons to whom regulation and uniformity are ends in themselves.

The word "liberal," in such circumstances, has lost any real meaning. For some "liberals," as Mr. Clark suggests, the chief value of the word is its employment as a convenient disguise: "liberal" has one meaning for the neophyte or outsider, and another for the initiate, in these circles. I found it amusing to observe the chagrin of some such persons when they read Orwell on Newspeak and Doublethink.

The liberal's distorted myth of private self-sufficiency in all things has been exploded; his complacent expectation of unchecked progress has been overwhelmed by social disorder and private discontent; his confidence in Rationality has been shattered beyond repair. To what, then, does he cling nowadays? To the feeble hope, ordinarily, of some sort of brummagem utopia of creature-comforts, characterized by equality of condition, uniformity of life and thought, pervasive state regulation, and the obliteration of traditional morality.

In a recent book by Mr. William H. McNeil, *Past and Future,* we see the best that the philosophers of American liberalism have to offer; and, as the *Times Literary Supplement* comments, "the alarming thing

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about his book is that the perfect world which he describes, and still more the means of achieving it, are far more terrifying and horrible" than the writings of our pessimistic realists. Mr. McNeil, as if determined to carry liberal neoterism to its logical absurdity, is in love with vertiginous speed, and exhorts us to run faster still, for running's sake. And where will this speed take us to? Why, to an omnipotent world state, a masterpiece of intricate regulation, which (like Marx's triumph of the proletariat) replaces change by changelessness, and imposes an eternal compulsory uniformity upon the whole human race, to which culmination Mr. McNeil looks forward cheerfully. Now I think that this is, indeed, the natural culmination of the Benthamite view of man and society; but I think that most people who call themselves liberals would find this society quite intolerable.

IN ordinary usage, the word "conservative" tends to imply a proclivity toward permanence, and "liberal" to imply a proclivity toward progression. But the twentieth-century liberal has come to care less and less about variety, individuality, moral improvement, and the other subjects which, in the eyes of John Stuart Mill, were the ends of liberalism: instead, he is willing to settle for an eternal and equalitarian stability.

The English Socialist has lowered his sights to the mark of middle-class comfort for the masses; the American liberal would be quite content with a universal suburbia. It is the genuine conservative, nowadays, who speaks out against an overweening complacency and a world that would be a life-in-death. It is the conservative who asserts the claims of Justice and Order and Liberty against the demand for a featureless Security.

Whatever the blessings of Security, the thinking conservative believes, it is possible to buy Security at too high a price. And the price we are now in danger of paying is very high indeed. It is the price of manhood.

Once real virtue, manhood, the courage and responsibility of free men, are extinguished in a society, presently security evaporates, too; but that is the lesser loss. The conservative maintains that there is something better than to know what it is to be guaranteed and protected and pensioned. That better state is to know what it is to be a man.

The liberal, old style or new style, always has tended to leave out of his calculations the tragic sense of life, without which men and women remain as children. Poverty is not in itself an evil; nor inequality; nor death. All these may be occasions for virtue. But a society which would deny men the right to struggle against evil for the sake of good, or which simply ceased to distinguish between good and evil, would constitute that domination of the Anti-Christ which now must seem to all reflective men a possibility so strong as to demonstrate the profound truth that takes the form of myth.

The gist of my reasoning is this: I think that whatever remains of nineteenth-century liberalism is rapidly sinking into an uninspired collectivism, which at best could bring to society only a dreary monotony. And I do not think that even this poor best could be realized;

our fallen human nature would make short work even of a brummagem utopia. Although we might find it possible to extirpate heroism, with all the devices for suppression and indoctrination now at our command, we could scarcely succeed in extirpating villainy. Nineteenth-century liberal humanitarianism would come down at last to a domination of squalid oligarchs, all in the name of "democracy" and "progress" and "security."

I AM alarmed, therefore, at the dissolution of liberalism. This leaves a vacuum: and I do not want to see that vacuum filled by an intolerant radicalism of any description.

"Liberalism," though it remains for many people what Mr. Richard Weaver calls a god-term, really has ceased to signify anything, even among its more sincere partisans, than a vague good will. Good will divorced from right reason and free institutions can accomplish very little in this time of troubles. It is my hope that many people genuinely attached to justice and order and liberty, who in the past have called themselves liberals, now may see a new meaning in conservatism.

There are ages when custom and inertia lie insufferably heavy upon mankind; and such an age may come again; but this is not our age. Ours is a time when the moral and social heritage of many centuries of civilization is in imminent peril from the forces of vertiginous and indiscriminate change. The man who, in a different time, ought to be a reformer, now has the duty of being a conservator.

The liberal imagination has run out; the liberal myth, feeble in its beginnings, is now exhausted; and what is best in our society will have to be saved, if it is to be saved at all, by the advocates of some older and more stalwart system of thought.

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It is not a new political party that I am recommending, or any neat program of positive legislation. The conservative task, if it is to be accomplished successfully, will be carried on within the minds of men. The bulk of both our national political parties is conservative, and this is all to the good. I do not mean that our parties ought to be unprincipled; quite the contrary; they need a good deal more principle than they manifest now. But the great labor of conserving our legacy of justice and order and liberty, of keeping mankind truly human, leaves much room for two conservative parties, differing about means, but substantially agreed upon the ends of life and society. We shall have fanaticism and radicalism enough to contend against in the rest of the world.

Nor do I think that this work of conservation can be accomplished by any particular class—certainly not by any idealization of "business rule." The late Robert Taft, with his accustomed forthrightness, said that the businessman is not calculated to be a statesman. The businessman, if he is as busy as his name implies, has little time to learn to be a philosopher or a legislator or a governor of men. Burke said this same thing a great while ago; it is no less true today.

Some men of business are able politicians, but this is in spite of their responsibilities in business, not because of them. We will do well to remember Dr. Johnson's adage that a man is seldom more innocently occupied than when he is engaged in making money; but innocence is not the same thing as statecraft. One of the principles of conservatism is the protection of private property and honest industry, and there is every reason just now why conservatives ought to emphasize this principle. Yet respect for the rights and duties of business does not mean that industrialists ought to write our laws and direct our state policies.

I hope that we Americans will conserve "free enterprise" and "economic stability" and all the best features of an economy governed by volition rather than compulsion. But we will conserve these things only if we set our sights higher and conserve something larger, a society of variety and tradition and veneration. The liberals cannot do that work for us. I do not know whether the conservatives can; but it is time they began to try.

AN APPEAL

Mother M. Laurentine, Ursuline Convent, Samtoli, P.O. Simdega, Dt. Ranchi-Bihar, India, needs $800 for rice to feed her community's two hundred children during the coming year. She has three months to obtain this sum. Mother Laurentine writes that it is heartrending to see so many destitute people and be unable to help them. Donations may be sent to her direct (Airmail postage: 25¢).

LABOR UNITY

The Last CIO Convention?

THE reaction of John L. Lewis to the brightening prospect of merger between the AFL and CIO was pungently expressed in his paper, the *Mine Workers' Journal,* by the observation that "the chief medicine men [George Meany and Walter Reuther] are smoking that smelly old peace pipe again."

Old John's sarcasm, however, could not alter the fact that the peace pipe was smelling a lot more fragrant than it ever had since the CIO first broke away in 1935.

On October 15, committees from both federations met in friendly fashion and came out with a flat statement that "it is the unanimous decision of this joint committee of the AFL and CIO to create a single trade union center in America through the process of merger which will preserve the integrity of each affiliated national and international union."

Meany, AFL president who is figured to remain as head of the combined organizations, explained that this meant that the two federations would be merged first and then an effort made to marry the overlapping unions and to set up machinery to solve jurisdictional disputes.

This solution, which is probably the only practical one, nevertheless presents some practical problems of its own. For example, what assurance does a small industrial union in the CIO have that it will not be carved and eaten by a number of large AFL craft unions once it commits itself to the mercies of a merged federation where the AFL unions outnumber the CIO?

This uneasiness produced some friction at the subsequent meeting of the sub-committee of top leaders who had been delegated to work out the details of a specific plan of merger.

This meeting, held in November, broke up without any plan agreed to, and Walter Reuther is reported to have reproached Meany for not persuading more of the AFL's major unions to sign the AFL-CIO no-raiding agreement. Reuther believes that this pact must serve as the foundation and corner-stone of any merger. So far 75 of the AFL's 111 unions have signed it but the holdouts include such troublesome giants as the 1,300,000-member Teamster colossus of Dave Beck and the 800,000-strong Carpenters' Union.

After the meeting Meany wrote Reuther a letter in which he counter-reproached the CIO president for

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impugning his good faith. And Reuther began talking about the need for guarantees to the CIO on the principles of industrial unionism, particularly in organizing such unorganized industries as chemicals and plastics, the principle of non-discrimination because of race, and the question of cleaning out racketeers.

As the CIO gathered for its annual convention in Los Angeles December 6th it began to look as if the old peace pipe was beginning to smell up the wigwam in the same fashion that it did when John L., Bill Green and Phil Murray were chewing on it back in the 30's and 40's, with the inevitable result that the assembled braves would have to break for the fresh air and a return to the warpath.

But the effect of the CIO convention has been to clear the air. Reuther spoke of the problems and the difficulties but he did not ask for a resolution that would make it easy for the CIO's top brass to pull out of any future merger talks. The resolution that was passed, unanimously, ordered the CIO's top officers to work out a merger "based on the principles of free democratic unionism" and left it at that without laying down any more specific conditions.

AROUND the convention the consensus was that merger was a pretty sure thing sometime during 1955. Earlier I talked to a CIO member of the unity committee, an international president, and it was his feeling that there was a good chance of marriage within six months.

One of the most hopeful signs at Los Angeles was the new attitude of Dave McDonald, president of the Steelworkers Union which has been the only important non-signer on the CIO side of the no-raiding pact.

Unlike a year ago when McDonald handed out public snubs to Reuther, at Los Angeles he was saying nice things about Walter, shaking his hand after his re-election as president, assuring the delegates of his agreement with Reuther on the unity question, and promising that his union would sign the no-raiding pact if this was necessary for successful completion of merger plans.

Although he has not signed the no-raiding agreement McDonald seems right now to be more eager for unity than Reuther. The effect of the CIO convention is to give the movement a push while at the same time leaving the CIO negotiators free to bargain for a more honorable peace than has presently been offered by the AFL. This is all to the good.

The only real obstacle to labor unity has been the question of jobs and who is going to lose them. Reuther has indicated that he is willing to step aside for Meany and he seems to mean it. That solves the major problem. It may be a little wasteful for a few years, until normal resignations thin things out, but the signs are that everybody on the two staffs will be kept on in some capacity or other.

On principle there is no longer, basically, any disagreement. AFL union leaders tend to be more conservative than CIO. They are usually older men. They are certainly more craft-union minded. But this is not to say that the AFL doesn't have industrial unions in its midst—such as the Ladies Garment Workers, the Hatters, the Papermakers—or the CIO an occasional craft union, such as the Lithographers, the Barbers, or the Marine Engineers. What is more significant, for many years AFL craft unions such as the Electricians or the Machinists have been organizing plants on an industrial basis, taking in everybody.

On political action the AFL has moved to the left, namely toward more action, and the CIO has moved to the right, toward a greater tolerance of working within the established American two-party system. Of course the forced exodus of the Communist-dominated unions in 1949-50 did a great deal to bring the two organizations closer together. And so did the death of William Green, God rest his soul, and maybe even the death of Phil Murray, with all his greatness and sweetness of character, because it is not easy for the best of men to forget the old sores and the old wounds.

What remains is a strong conviction, all the way up and down the hierarchy of labor, from the lowliest working stiff to the most exalted porkchopper, that there is no longer any good excuse for this division, that in union there is strength, and that the American workingman still needs all the strength he can beg, borrow or steal.

I think this conviction will produce the merger, in spite of the problems.

Other CIO convention highlights:

¶ Walter Reuther rebuked the Transport Workers' Mike Quill, New York's *enfant terrible,* for his denunciation of the Democratic party and his urging of independent labor parties at the state and national level. Reuther defended the Democrats. In the CIO executive board earlier he demonstrated even more political conservatism by urging more intensive cultivation of middle-road politicians.

¶ The delegates gave an ovation to leaders of 10,000 Massachusetts leather workers who came to the convention to ask for a charter and announce their disaffiliation from the Communist-dominated Fur and Leather Workers Union, formerly CIO and now independent. This action was precipitated by reports of a merger between the Communist union and the powerful AFL Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen, over George Meany's objections. This merger would give the Fur and Leather Workers an autonomous division with their own treasury. And what Pat Gorman, aging Meatcutter chief, can be thinking of I can't imagine.

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¶ Reuther called attention to what may be the biggest problem of them all, the accelerated increase of "automation," the use of automatic machines in factory production to replace men, and called upon the federal government to legislate guarantees that this movement would not lead to mass unemployment.

Work reports that Reuther was inspecting some of these machines recently at Ford's engine plant in Cleveland. A company official pointed to the machines and asked, "How are you going to collect union dues from those guys?"

To which Reuther is supposed to have replied, "And how are you going to get them to buy Fords?"

That puts it in a nutshell.

I think I will predict that before the election of 1956 even the Administration will be admitting that unemployment is over 5,000,000.

JOHN C. CORT.

THE SCREEN

I'LL NEVER FORGET WHAT'SITSNAME

EACH year as I submit my list of "best ten," I wonder how many of those films will be remembered ten, or even five years later. Since this is one time of the year, above all others, when a critic is allowed to express his personal preferences, he also hopes his selections will have some chances for permanence. Hollywood will long remember 1954 as the year in which the industry got on it feet again financially, recovered from the kind of 3-D that required the wearing of special glasses, and finally realized that television was not an ogre but a friendly competitor that could be lived with and sometimes even worked with. You may not remember 1954 as the year during which the films listed below were released, but I hope you do recall these movies with some affection. Here are my "best ten" arranged more or less in order of preference:

On the Waterfront: Marlon Brando's first-rate performance as a longshoreman who defied a racketeering union leader and Director Elia Kazan's magnificent use of cinema to tell about the "shape-up" and other wrongs of the New York waterfront made this a memorable film. Although its themes were oversimplified, Budd Schulberg's fine script plus the realistic Hoboken backgrounds and a cast that included Eva Marie Saint, Lee J. Cobb and Karl Malden (as the counterpart of Father Corridan) helped this picture to stand as the best on the subject of labor and certainly as one of the best on the dignity of man.

The Country Girl: George Seaton, who wrote the script for this from Clifford Odets' play, also directed Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly and William Holden in the finest performances of their careers and told a story about problem-drinkers that was both moving and understanding.

Bread, Love and Dreams: a thoroughly delightful Italian movie that bubbled over with good will and good performances by Vittorio De Sica, lovely Gina Lollobrigida and others in telling about life in a small village.

Romeo and Juliet: Although Shakespeare's poetry has been read by more capable actors, this version of his play was one of the most visually-beautiful color movies ever made, and Renato Castellani deserves a long-ringing round of applause for this direction, his choice of Italian backgrounds and sets and his courage in casting young people (Susan Shentall, Laurence Harvey) in the title roles.

Diary of a Country Priest: a fascinating French film that also merits applause—for Director Robert Bresson, who was able to capture in austere though unusually handsome black-and-white photography the themes of Bernanos' great novel, and for actor Claude Laydu, who was able to convey the spiritual conflicts of this intensely sincere young priest.

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers: a light and refreshing comedy, expertly directed by Stanley Donen, with musical numbers that were well integrated into the Stephen Vincent Benet story and staged by Michael Kidd with an exuberant cast who made you want to kick up your heels.

The Vanishing Prairie: Walt Disney's documentary about wild life from the Mississippi to the Rockies was more entertaining and informative than many a high-budgeted feature film—and no doubt took much more patience to make.

Executive Suite: Producer John Houseman and Director Robert Wise used an all-star cast to show us how the big shots in a corporation behave. While their behavior, as patterned after Cameron Hawley's novel, was not particularly nice, it was absorbing to watch and resulted in several top-notch portrayals, especially by Nina Foch and Fredric March.

A Star Is Born: Although this expensive and lengthy picture was obviously designed as a vehicle for Judy Garland's return to the screen and was quite uneven in story values, it did prove highly entertaining, and it won much-deserved huzzahs for Judy and James Mason.

The Heart of the Matter: in my estimation, the most thought-provoking film of the year in spite of its messing around with the finale of Graham Greene's story. Trevor Howard, assisted by Elizabeth Allan and Maria Schell, gave a practically flawless performance as Scobie, who could not stand seeing anyone hurt even by the truth.

So stand the ten; if some of your favorites are miss-

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ing, please remember some of mine are too. 1954's list could easily have stretched on to twenty—with some good words about several other English films like the hilarious version of "The Pickwick Papers" and the charming gentility of Alec Guinness in "The Detective" and those captivating children in "The Little Kidnappers." The list could have included John Huston's clever satire on crooks, "Beat the Devil," or Jacques Tati's wonderful comedy, "Mr. Hulot's Holiday," or that extraordinarily moving documentary about Helen Keller, "The Unconquered." It could have some complimentary things to say about the good music and James Stewart's warm performance in "The Glenn Miller Story," or about the exciting color and verve of "Carmen Jones," or about the robust adventures in "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," and certainly it could have many approving things to say about those two beautifully-photographed, highly adult pictures from Japan, "Ugetsu" and "Gate of Hell." But the list has to stop somewhere. So you make your own additions and let's hope 1955 does as well by us.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

TRADE WITH JAPAN

Garden City, N. Y.

TO The Editors: A heated battle is currently taking place in Washington before the Tariff Commission over proposals to reduce tariff barriers on certain objects for the Japanese. In view of your continuing interest in such problems, it seems pertinent at this time to call attention to the seriousness of the problems facing the Japanese and of the necessity that Japan be enabled to trade with the free world.

Japan has almost 87,000,000 people crowded into four tiny islands. Her population is expected to reach 100,000,000 by 1970. At the same time, only one-sixth of Japan is arable land. In actual acreage figures, Japan has only the same amount of farm land as the state of New York. Almost every inch of this land is under intensive cultivation. Yet despite a yield per acre in growing rice that is above that of any other country in Asia, Japan must import more than one-fifth of her food.

The situation is further intensified by both the ill effects of the war and by the rise of Communism in Asia. By the war, for example, Japan lost forty-five per cent of her possessions, and her industry and shipping were both reduced. By the rise of Communism in Asia, Japan lost her trade with China which before the war amounted to twenty-five per cent of her total trade.

Japan must either trade with the free world, selling industrial products so that she can in turn buy food to feed her people, or trade with the Communist countries. In effect, the latter decision would mean that Japan would go Communist or be forced to make compromises with the Communists which would jeopardize her position in the free world.

If Japan goes Communist, the United States would lose its most valuable ally in the Far East. Soviet Russia would gain a highly industrial and strategically-placed arsenal. President Eisenhower, in an address before the National Editorial Association last June 22, warned that if Japan were to go Communist, "the Western Pacific would become a Communist lake."

At present the Japanese are attempting to solve their economic problems by killing their babies. Possibly 6,000,000 babies have been slain by abortions, according to Japanese government estimates, since the operations were legalized under laws passed by the Japanese Diet in 1948. This has helped spread despair, particularly among the young in Japan.

Father Vincent S. Kearney in the November 20 issue of *America* points out that if Japan's economy collapses or if Japan goes Communist, America will lose one of its good customers. For "the United States . . . sells Japan products valued at $750 million a year and buys only a halting $250 million worth." Australia, Canada, and the Phillipines also sell Japan far more than they buy from her.

The items involved in the tariff battle are naturally important to those concerned with them as a means of livelihood, but they represent only a small part of our total economy. They include tuna fish, chinaware, toys, pen and pencil sets, wool and silk products. Their importance to the Japanese is considerably larger, however, as these are among the few things that Japan is able to export.

My hope, based on the experience of having served in Japan as a Naval officer during the early part of the Korean war, is that more attention will be given to Japan's problems. The road to peace is certainly not through abortions to solve economic problems or through such a depressed Japanese economy that Communism is a constant temptation. For Japan to remain an ally of the West, America and other Western nations must make a determined effort to understand Japan's economic problems and help her to solve them.

GEORGE P. CARLIN.

CHRISTIAN CULTURE

Washington, D. C.

TO The Editors: Almost a year has elapsed since The Commonweal began presenting a cycle of articles on Christian culture and education, thereby allowing its readers a momentary vision of both the

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direct thought and the indirect attitudes a number of thoughtful people are giving to these problems. The extended moments spent with these minds—Dawson, Mullaney, Simons and Cunningham—have led some to final questioning of exactly what benefits the dialogue has provided to the cause in whose name it was begun.

I must associate my voice with those who are inclined to believe that Mr. Dawson's initial article in the December 4, 1953 issue has, when read in the light of the intellectual follow-up it has been given, done a distinct disservice to serious reflection on the needs of Catholic education in this country and has also rather disarmingly put the whole question of basic educational philosophies in that rather vaguely obscure corner to which impertinently questioning children are generally consigned. His voice has in certain ways come forth at precisely the wrong moment even though, in the final analysis, it might be demonstrated that this moment has been with us for quite a long period and indeed, in one way or another, ought to be dispelled. Looked at in this way, Mr. Dawson's utterance may be that kind of spark that will help us illuminate our shadowy thinking in the tiring effort of getting back to basic and enduring verities. If this is so, it will not be the first time that Mr. Dawson's immense and gentle learning has been of immeasurable demonstrative aid to us. What is certain is that his terminology and that of his apparent supporters—I think of Father Cunningham—has led us immediately to the core of the problem rather than to the core of the curriculum.

Mr. Dawson's contention that Christian culture is a valid field of study is one that can be accepted only with certain reservations, the major one being a kind of indecision in the critical mind as to what exactly is meant by the expression itself. Mr. Dawson has broken down his field of study into three great periods which, rather than weakening the cultural fallacy, seem to strengthen it. Here we are once again perilously close to the association of the Church with a particular culture, the Western, and, Mr. Dawson's distinctions to the contrary, we are treading on very dangerous ground indeed; for it is hard to imagine that "Christian culture" has existed within the Western tradition without being an integral part of it. It would be better, I suspect, to begin by divorcing the Church from an essential connection with any culture while never denying, as there is a tendency in France to do, that the Church plays a real role in shaping the culture within which, accidentally, it operates at a given time and place. Acting thus, we will avoid giving the idea that the West and Christianity are pretty much the same thing, that one is the finer hour of the other, or that the other loses its value totally when it wanders from the established norm.

This may seem like carping and it is meant to be, for the Church and its faithful must carp if they are to dispel the fallacy now prevalent in the popular mind that Christianity and Western civilization are mutually inclusive. I suspect that Mr. Dawson would agree with this. What I must take exception to is his failure to realize that this fallacy of the popular mind is often repeated in the academic and clerical mind. Past experience has shown us that when one wishes to discuss educational reform it is not sufficient to establish ideas; consideration must also be given to the present tenor of educational effort and the germs of possible distortion or misunderstanding subsisting therein.

My first argument with Mr. Dawson can be reduced to perhaps one of pure but important semantics. My second is more fundamental and has been raised, if I understand him correctly, by James V. Mullaney in his letter to The Commonweal, though again Mr. Mullaney's objections do not go so far as mine. I do agree with him, however, when he questions Mr. Dawson's postulate that Christian culture should be the core of the curriculum. But I would carry the objection one logical step further by wondering how we can justify, from an historical and intellectual outlook, placing such a program in the core of the syllabus.

The mind of man, I fear, is not developed in such logical bits and pieces as suggested by Mr. Dawson's three-period division. Man's intellectual history is sometimes wordlessly confusing and, though a certain amount of intelligibility must be wrought out of this for reasons of pedagogical order, it is questionable that the compartmentalizing of thought is a worthy procedure. Students in this century, or in any century for that matter, are called upon to think critically and even worthily in periods of history with which they do not necessarily agree or whose traditional practices, thought and ideologies may elicit their robust antipathy. But in order that these students may react in the manner suggested above they must have the background tools with which intelligent men work validly.

Mr. Dawson is a case in point. Without the knowledge (or merely the critical and scholarly paraphernalia) he acquired at the university, it is doubtful that he would be able to make the searching evaluations that have enriched both our minds and his. It is minds like his that we need, though personally I might hope for conclusions different from those he has recently expressed. What I am saying is this: we do not live in times in which the Christian community or any of its parts can withdraw into contemplation of particular periods, no matter how golden they may have been. We cannot, without danger of being absent from those places where ideas are generated, withdraw into our own closed studies merely because we do not like the world or because we feel it has no values. In fact, our

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appreciation of those ideas stems from a certain basic historic knowledge as well as from a basic personal conviction that we have given this thought the time and study that evaluation requires, particularly when this evaluation carries serious condemnation along with it. *A priori* establishment of critical frames of reference is a very risky step to take in a moment of either enthusiasm or discovery and seems to indicate quite a monumental break with the ideal tradition of learning.

We are on delicate, though I think not shaky ground here and we must each be respectful of the other's position. I am inclined to believe that higher education's referential frame must be historical, though both total absolutism and dominating relativism must be avoided. Human experience, as seen in its pattern of fidelity or infidelity to God and His laws, takes place in history, providing, even though not always with the certitude we would like, a pattern of development. Critical thinking might appraise this development as more or less qualitative but, for the sake of understanding, we should be able to agree that such development is at least temporal. At given moments in history we are participants, more or less assenting, always responsible, to this developmental pattern. And we are all responsible, individually though sometimes not collectively, for our actions in history for reasons that rarely have the same source. But, in order to reach a personal synthesis of the past that will prepare us for the future, we must be given the chance of working as totally as human intellectual limitations allow us with the past that has evolved our present.

Here my difference with Mr. Dawson is as much of kind as of degree. I cannot envision the preparation of Christian students merely in order that others, those disinherited men of Western civilization, may be convinced that Christian culture is a valid unit of study containing worthwhile knowledge. And, at the same time, I am not advocating that Christians ignore longer the values of the cultural expression formulated by Christian men. What I do advocate is a via media aiming, not at the resurrection of a happy or distinguished past, but at the formation of vibrant intellects aware both of *this* past and the other as things often articulated in the same pattern; intellects willing to do for this century what Cassiodorus did for the early Middle Ages.

For a while it seemed that we had passed through and out of the limitations we showed so lamentably in the nineteenth century. Newman's *Grammar of Assent* and *Development of Christian Doctrine* were sure indications of a new spirit: the alive and honest and thinking Christian mind aware of the past and devotedly conscious of the future's need of a tellingly aware present. Even if we were to accept Mr. Dawson's rather dark estimate of the vacuum of the Western world (and it is an estimate which, in certain respects, seems to make a moral person of this civilization), it is seriously questionable that his suggestion is a solution. The heavy atmosphere of the Ghetto is here; the impressive retreat of Chesterton and Belloc lurks in the cheerful disassociation from their environments that it offers to Christians.

The idea of students, and not only Christian students, studying the contribution made by Christian intellects to the processes of various civilizations in the over-all contexts of these civilizations is valid. To be responsible, it must, I suspect, be studied both with regard to the critiques established above and with regard to the rôle the institution in which it is to be conducted is supposed to play. Here I come to my most strenuous and fundamental objection to the series of articles that The Commonweal has published on this subject in the last twelve months.

It is a disagreement hard to express intelligibly without explaining, if only briefly, certain basic assumptions. These are three: 1) that Catholic colleges in this country represent or should represent institutions based on the intellectual principles generally governing universities and stated clearly, eloquently and often unbeatably by Cardinal Newman; 2) that universities, in so far as such sustained objective effort is possible, should attempt to teach all truth on an egalitarian basis, reserving always a special place for theology or metaphysics as the highest of the sciences; 3) that, in doing this, universities should have principles that are permanent and which will always be a measure of both their worth and durability; indeed, this notion of the university as a citadel strikes me as the most significant of its functions.

Now, in his exposition, Mr. Dawson does not attribute these or any other intrinsic values to the university or other centers of learning purporting to accomplish similar ends. In this respect his approach is deeply disappointing. His consideration leaves out the university until the moment in which he, like so many others from Napoleon to Dewey, finds a utilitarian value for it; that sudden moment in which he finds that it can serve the function he wants and not the inherent function of disengaged and uncommitted critical thinking it represents *in se*. His analysis states, even if only by indirection, a divorce of the university from the creative or even sustaining qualities of a given society or civilization. If for a moment we suspend judgments suggested above and agree with the fundamental richness of what he is saying, we still cannot escape from the fact that the university is once again being compromised, cut off from the mainstream and being used for ends generally reserved to organs of a secondary function.

The question raised here is one that Mr. Dawson has not initiated, but, again by indirection, his justly

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authoritative voice has carried us even further from posing it; for he is accepting automatically a vision that is too much with us: the exclusively utilitarian concept of the university as a kind of passive, periodically attractive, handmaid of a capricious society. I do not write to defend presently-functioning universities; but I do write to defend the notion *and* existence of that independent body, devotedly and fearlessly seeking after truth, inspired by the postulates given above. And, in my mind as in those of others, this institution is the university. It has been severely attacked in our times, as it has been severely attacked in all ages. The hue and cry, though, on an emotional level, seem to indicate the merit of its idea.

It may be that Mr. Dawson's idea is meant to be the restoration of dignity to the university, too. Saying this, however, seems to presume something for which there is no evidence. Had his examination started with concern over the general ideological orientation of modern universities, I for one would have been glad to give him a sympathetic ear. But his two points of departure —the sickness of Western civilization and the value of Christian culture as a unit, *the* unit of study—indicate other interests. And they indicate the beginning of a new movement (witness the interest created by his original and subsequent articles) within educational circles. One hears talk of further revision, conferences to be called anew.

I do not mean to become impatient and I fear becoming emotional in questions of such grave moment. But I must raise one protesting voice in asking that before revision—and revision in this country, having lost its etymological significance, usually means change and not restudy—we spend some time rethinking basic values and fundamental principles; that we establish safe ground for the mission our universities are called upon to perform and not fall into the dangerous relativism we cry against so often. Attempts at this kind of rethinking have been made; and they have shown us at least one thing: whenever universities have lost their independent function, the values upon which creative and intellectual life feeds have been correspondingly, sometimes irreparably, damaged. Christian men, working and thinking together in different spots throughout the world, conscious that the universality of their Church is being increasingly paralleled in other segments of human life, should be able to discover those long certitudes that give flight to the owl of night.

JOSEPH H. MCMAHON.

BOOKS

Walt Whitman at Home

SEYMOUR KRIM

> *"Whitman established the national timbre. One may not need him at home because it is in the air, this tonic of his. But if one is abroad; if one is ever likely to forget one's birthright, to lose faith, being surrounded by disparagers, one can find in Whitman the reassurance. Whitman goes bail for the nation."*
>
> —Ezra Pound.

AT the age of seventy Walt Whitman was a semi-cripple sitting out his last days in Camden, New Jersey, but he remarked to Horace Traubel on the Sunday morning of April 7, 1889 that "the baseball boys" were home from their world tour, and what a kick it would give him "to meet them, talk with them, ask them some questions." The old man hadn't lost an ounce of his intense interest in the most typical expressions of democratic public life—"Baseball's our game: has the snap, go, fling, of the American atmosphere"—and if it had been at all possible, one can visualize him pumping his wheel-chair into Manhattan and shooting the breeze with the world series champions of that day. He was as consummately alive as any man has ever been, like the nation whose image he embodied for the world and whose character is finally inseparable from his own as a poet. For all those people who haven't read Whitman since high-school, and men and women of recent naturalization who would like to know what makes our best grass so green and vigorous, there is now the latest volume of Horace Traubel's *With Walt Whitman in Camden* [edited by Sculley Bradley, University of Pennsylvania Press, $8.].

This huge work, which hasn't all been published yet, gives us the closest look and listen to Whitman

Mr. Krim contributes frequently to The Commonweal and other publications.

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that has ever been recorded. But the odd thing is how few people know about its existence. The present volume—each of them runs to approximately five hundred pages—is the fourth to appear in print; at least two more, depending on how the unpublished part of the manuscript is divided, are yet to come, As the accurate, humanized record of the last four years in the life of perhaps the most inherent artist in the country's history, the books are invaluable; in fact one day they will probably become a classic, when properly pared, edited and fitted into one condensed volume with an official critical blessing in the front. But until that time the peculiar history of these books and the way in which they came to be written is itself an interesting and little-known story.

Horace Logo Traubel had known Whitman since the age of fifteen, when the already partially paralyzed poet left Washington and came to live with his younger brother George in Camden. The Traubels lived in the vicinity, and Horace, already indoctrinated with a love of books, music and ideas by his father, a German immigrant lithographer, soon became a steady visitor at the Whitmans'. As he grew older Traubel increasingly became "the companion and bearer of burdens for the physically handicapped poet," and during the 1880's, although he had married and was actively engaged in Socialist activities which Whitman did not share in, Traubel took over the functions of literary agent, adviser, critic, letter-writer and cheerer-upper to Whitman. He had become the youthful right arm to the tired sage, and in time it occurred to him to take down short-hand notes of all that Whitman said, beginning on March 28, 1888 and ending with the poet's death in 1892.

Whitman knew that Traubel would one day write a book about him—in fact he kept reminding the younger man, "Whatever you do don't prettify me"—but he had no idea that it was to be a massive document of his every word. This knowledge might have destroyed his spontaneity, or at least introduced the possibility of self-consciousness; Traubel therefore said nothing to Whitman of the form his book would take, but merely wrote down everything that had occurred when he returned home from his usual two-hour visit with the poet each evening.

It is very likely that at the time he was taking his notes Traubel did not know exactly what form he would finally give to his book. But when Whitman died and the usual mass of misinformation and legend began to appear in the press—"You must save me from my friends, Horace"—the matter was apparently decided for Traubel, and he devoted most of the remaining part of his life to insuring that the American people would one day have an exhaustive and completely truthful account of the last four years of Whitman's life. The first volume of *With Walt Whitman in Camden,* covering the four months from March to July of 1888, was published in 1906; the second volume, relating conversations from July to October of the same year, came out in 1908; and the third volume, extending from October of 1888 to late January of 1889, was published in 1914. After that—silence. Traubel died, one would imagine a rather embittered figure, in 1919 with some half of his manuscript still unpublished and with the established New York and Boston firms not interested in bringing it out.

Thus it was not until late last year that the fourth volume was released to the public, due, one gathers, to the perseverance of Mr. Bradley who tracked it down and persuaded Horace Traubel's widow to make it available to him for editing and publication. Whitman himself would most likely have been quite composed about this lapse, for he conceived of time in serene, mastodonic cycles, and good-naturally took it for granted that it would not be until 1988 that *Leaves of Grass* would be considered as either a success or failure. But the forty-year burial of Traubel's record remains an incredible chapter in literary history.

EXACTLY what is to be found in volume four of *With Walt Whitman in Camden?* Is it told entirely in the form of conversations? Is the talk fascinating, or at all in the style of Boswell's Johnson? Does it contain new information about Whitman?

The broadest description of Traubel's entire work, including volume four, is to say that it most resembles, of all previous literary biographies known to this writer, Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe.* The difference lies in the fact that Traubel is much more exhaustive and somehow more doggedly reliable than Eckermann; one is positive that every bit of conversation attributed to Whitman, including the way it is said, is authentic. The book is not narrated exclusively in conversation. As stated before, Traubel visited Whitman each evening at the poet's small house at 330 Mickle Street, Camden, and for a couple of hours they discussed various business chores that Traubel was to do for Whitman, the state of the old man's health, and life and letters in general. Everything that occurred from the moment Traubel entered Whitman's house each evening until he left, is dated and recorded in volume four. This includes description as well as conversation, and includes Traubel's comments, and those of visitors, as well as Whitman's.

As to the quality of Whitman's talk, it has not the formal beauty nor the profoundity of either Dr. Johnson's or Goethe's; but then we do not go to it for the same purpose. Its main attraction is its common and seemingly limitless humanity, revealed as much in Whitman's manner of speaking as in his opinions. The man's responses, laughter, silences, are fascinating

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in their own way because like the *Leaves* themselves they communicate the essential intimacy and extraordinary warmth of his nature. It is not brilliant talk that will be found in the book; but rather a homely, utterly clear picture of a great family man—friends and the race in general constituting his brood—kibitzing warmly about everything that came to mind.

As in his writing, so in his talk Whitman had an untutored and home-made philosophical quality, subjecting every topic under discussion to a crude but effective acid of values and the search for truth. As Traubel has caught him, we see that the old poet has been considerably seasoned by time—his anger no longer explodes, but now salts the great simple dish of his plainness with piquancy—and made even more reflective than usual by the nature of his illness. He is stoical, as one would know he would be, but the glint of rebelliousness shows from his inner forge and gives humor and elasticity to his resignation.

Threaded through volume four, like the characters in a novel, are the various personalities whose lives were joined with Whitman's as a result of having rallied around him and the *Leaves* when both were under attack. (For those interested in the phenomenon of changing taste, and the fear and hatred incited by certain kinds of art, there is Louis Untermeyer's *A Walt Whitman Treasury,* which reprints some of the grotesque newspaper comments which greeted the *Leaves* in 1845; there is also Edith Wharton's autobiography, where she describes how Henry James read Whitman aloud reverently in his last years, as if to atone for the condescending review he had once written in the *Nation,* taking both book and poet apart with the relish of the young, brilliant and priggish.) The personalities who figure in volume four of Traubel's work include Dr. Maurice Bucke, a medical man who wanted to became a millionaire by patenting a Rube Goldberg-like "water-meter"; John Burroughs, the naturalist, who fell away from the stronger Whitman in an effort to find himself; and William O'Connor, an eloquent Irishman who wrote a passionate pro-Whitman pamphlet when the poet was dismissed from his Washington position by Secretary of the Interior Harlan (whom Whitman will make famous yet), and who coined the phrase "good gray poet."

Whitman constantly refers to his friends, worries about their health, has such obvious concern for them that the reader soon feels the same way—we are drawn into the family circle; by the time the end of the book is reached we are all participating in the ineluctable human drama of these lives, and we realize that it was out of just such ultra-human interest in his fellows that Whitman became the writer he did. (Some comment must be made at this point about Whitman's alleged homosexuality and its place in Traubel's chronicle. There is nothing from which to infer any overt homosexuality in Traubel's fourth volume, and one can be sure that he would have documented it without hesitation because he considered the old man to be above conventional morality.)

Although Whitman's inexhaustible interest in the life of his friends and his time is clearly shown in Traubel's portrait, there is woven into it, just as in the *Leaves,* his ultimate and paradoxical aloofness. He is finally untouchable, even when extending hand and heart in genuine cameraderie and concern. When Traubel presses him too far with a question, or to force an opinion out of Whitman—and the poet's very patience and occasional hesitancy of expression aroused a slightly sadistic streak in Traubel, wherein he would unnecessarily goad the old Buddha—Whitman will smack him down or, briefly, flash red in the eye.

There was a point beyond which Walt Whitman would not break communion with himself. In spite of his deep emotional commitment to many people and events one sees in him a final apartness. Frank and whole-hearted as he was, he was also secretive and enfolded within himself at a depth which could rarely be touched by others and only then by stinging his vanity. Annoying as this ultimate and impenetrable darkness was to the easy, light-seeking eyes of friends and admirers, it was no doubt the source of his art and the cave in which was fed, out of heart and soul, his majestic independence.

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"The Wit, Flamboyance and Faith of Dylan Thomas"

QUITE EARLY ONE MORNING. By Dylan Thomas. New Directions. $3.50.

By NICHOLAS JOOST

TO whatever extent Dylan Thomas has been accepted in the canon of English literature, we have accepted him as, primarily, a poet. The impact and bulk, if not the quality, of his essays and prose fiction have counted for less than the impact and bulk of his poems. All the pieces in *Quite Early One Morning* are, however, more than merely well worth the reprinting, serving as they do to illuminate some of the most remarkable poetic work of the past half-century.

These twenty-five autobiographical stories, book-reviews, talks, readings and panel discussions for the BBC, answers to editorial questions, and jottings for the press help round out the picture of himself as a poet that Dylan Thomas presented in his lyrics. First of all, we now see more clearly how the poet made his living, how he supported his wife and three children: he was a journalist and lecturer who managed rather more gracefully than most to infuse into what could have been hack work his feeling for the beauty and comedy of words and thus elevated run-of-the-mill journalism to higher journalism.

Second, the autobiographical stories, seven in number, printed here—though not comparable in scope to *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* and the apparently unfinished *Adventures in the Skin Trade*—will aid readers to understand Thomas's poetry more fully. "Reminiscences of Childhood," "Quite Early One Morning," and "A Child's Christmas in Wales" are not only charmingly, even touchingly evocative in themselves but also are valuable because they help us to see how Thomas's poems grew out of his Welsh environment. For example, in the first essay just listed, the poet explains the genesis of his poem "The Hunchback in the Park": "We knew every inhabitant of the park"—of the "large Welsh Town" where he was born—"every regular visitor, every nursemaid, every gardener, every old man. . . . The face of the old man who sat summer and winter on the bench looking over the reservoir, I can see clearly now and I wrote a poem long after I'd left the park and the seatown."

Two of Thomas's scripts for radio and cinema are in the book. As original pieces, they are easily the finest writing in the whole collection. "Return Journey" is a radio play in one act. The setting is the writer's beloved Welsh "seatown," and to it the mature Thomas, the Narrator of the play, returns in search of the fiery adolescent — "Two typewriter Thomas the ace news-dick," who along with Vernon Watkins would "write the most boiling poems. . . . ring the bells of London and paint it like a tart. . . ." But when the Narrator asks what has become of him now, the Park-Keeper answers, "Dead." Here Dylan Thomas takes his place with Whitman and Rimbaud and Thomas Wolfe as one of the Romantic confessional evokers of childhood. (I do not pretend to compare them in other respects, of course.)

The second script is a poem-commentary for the British government-produced documentary film, "Our Country," written as propaganda during the late war. Much more accessible for most readers than Thomas's *Collected Poems, 1934-1953*, "Our Country" nevertheless is not by that token less excellent. It is an outstanding example of the literary equivalent of what Paul Hindemith has termed *Gebrauchsmusik;* the Anglo-America cinema and radio have been responsible for many such scripts—without a description as pithy as the German term—but surely none more distinguished. Had he lived, Thomas undoubtedly would have added to the already solid achievement evinced by *The Doctor and the Devils, Under Milkwood,* and these two shorter scripts.

The critical talks and essays are less substantial as "monuments" of Thomas's art, and indeed at least one of them is downright flimsy ("The Festival Exhibition, 1951"). A minor catastrophe of the American edition is the talk "On Poetry" —actually excerpts taken from a discussion with James Stephens and broadcast by the BBC—which in its fuller British form is a rowdy highlight of the collection. But recommended to all poets and their readers is the essay "How to Be a Poet; or, The Ascent of Parnassus Made Easy," which constitutes an introduction to "a few of the main types of poets who have made the social and financial grade."

Nothing in this posthumous compilation, the editor of which goes unlisted, can vie with the great poems—"The Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait," "After the Funeral," "Poem in October," "A Winter's Tale," and the others. Yet, reading it, how poignantly one misses the living wit, flamboyance, and faith of Dylan Thomas.

REVIEWERS

Nicholas Joost, an associate editor of *Poetry* magazine, teaches at Assumption College in Worcester, Mass.

Michael P. Fogarty is a former editor of the London *Economist* and is presently a member of the faculty of the University of Cardiff in Wales.

John Cournos is a well-known critic, anthologist, and authority on Americana.

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Questions of Crime and Punishment

DOCUMENTS ON THE EXPULSION OF THE SUDETEN GERMANS. Compiled and introduced by Wilhelm K. Turnwald. Translated by Gerda Johannsen. Munich: University Press. THE TRAGEDY OF SILESIA: 1945-46. Compiled and edited by Johannes Kaps. Translated by Gladys H. Hartinger. Munich: Christ Unterwegs. (Both distributed by the German Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims.)

By MICHAEL P. FOGARTY

HAVING glanced through these books, I pushed them into my case to take out of the house. I believe in bringing my children up to the facts of life, but seven hundred pages of torture and rape do not belong on the family bookshelf. However, I do not complain of that, seeing the story these books have to tell of those Germans who were forcibly expelled from Silesia and the Sudeten area at the end of World War II. What worries me is something more fundamental. They leave me wondering very much what such books can be for.

I can see at once one perfectly proper purpose which they might serve. To torture a man, to rape a woman, to transport people in such conditions that thousands die on the way, is a crime even if the people to whom this is done should themselves be convicted criminals. A criminal retains his human dignity, and there are things which may not be done even by way of punishment. In this particular case the vast majority of the people concerned were not themselves criminals, convicted or otherwise. At worst they were passive accomplices of Nazi crimes; and I would not care to press even that argument very far. It is therefore right, first, that those who did to them the things described in these books should be punished, exactly as were the Nazi warders of Belsen or Auschwitz. And secondly, the victims are entitled to compensation. Their claim for this lies against the governments under whose authority the crimes against them were committed; those of Czechoslovakia (and I do not mean only the Communists), of Poland, and of the USSR. It is too much to hope that the individual criminals will be hunted down as they deserve. But it is conceivable, though improbable, that a compensation claim might be forced through by hard bargaining. If these books were meant simply to build up the case for such compensation, I would have nothing against them.

But they do not stop there. They also try—so far as I can see through their verbosity—to establish two much more doubtful points. First, that the Silesian and Sudeten German refugees are entitled to compensation *from non-German sources,* not merely for brutality and ill-treatment, but also for the loss of their land and property. And secondly, that this compensation should take the form of the return of the land and property they lost. In short, of the reoccupation by

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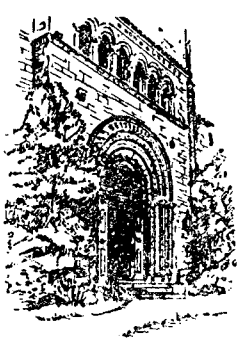

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Germans of a large part of Bohemia and West Poland.

Even as an exercise in the theory of international ethics, this argument seems to me very shaky. In effect, what certain governments in liberated Europe in 1945-6 said was this: "Our peoples are, obviously, entitled to reparation from Germany for all they have suffered under Hitler. We will take some of this in the form of plants, movable property, and current output. Another part we will take in land and buildings. The Germans now occupying the land and buildings in question will have to quit. The individuals will often be quite guiltless. But we cannot take property from Germany without also taking it from its individual owners. The duty of seeing that these owners are properly compensated and resettled lies upon the German people in general. For it is they as a group who owe us this debt."

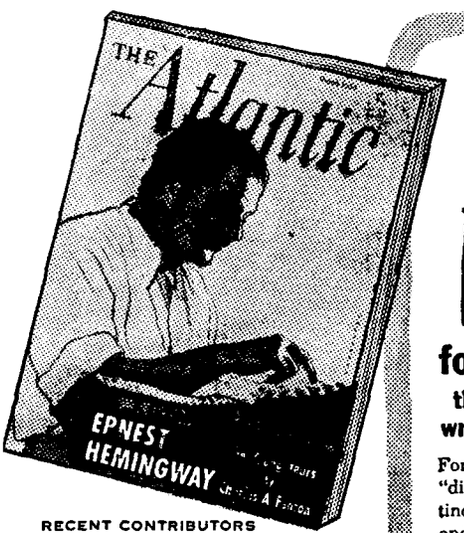
This, I believe, was a quite tenable position for those governments to take. I do not object to it in principle; I am not talking for the moment of how it was applied in practice — as applied to movable property. The only question is whether it can be applied to land and buildings as well. *The Tragedy of Silesia* points out, as the Pope did at the time, that grave reasons are needed to justify breaking up a community and resettling its people elsewhere. But in this case grave reasons were present. Both the *Tragedy* and *Documents* go on to argue that, if one's ancestors have lived in a certain place for so many generations, one is reduced to "misery" (their word, not mine) if required to resettle somewhere else. Tell that to the Americans; preferably the German-Americans. The authors also complain that Germany proper cannot offer to refugees a fair living. Tell that to Dr. Erhardt. Germany is already offering its people, refugee or otherwise, one of the best livings in Europe.

I feel even less happy about the authors' case when I find it being backed with legal arguments of a very dubious kind. The annexation of the Sudetenland to Germany was ratified by the Munich agreement. Since, *Documents* argues, this agreement has not yet been abrogated by the consent of all the contracting parties (as for instance under a peace treaty with Germany), that territory still remains legally under German sovereignty. I would have thought that there was enough duress about Munich to invalidate a contract even in a German court. But let us suppose that in terms of timeless, abstract justice the expellees could prove their right to reoccupy their former homeland. The most important point of all still remains. We do not live in an ivory tower but in the age of the cold war. That does not rule out the expellees' right to compensation, but it does rule out their right to seek it in that particular way.

Coexistence, as this magazine has repeatedly said, is a tough policy, not a soft one. It means divisions mobilized, bombers ready to take off, in short a hand ready on the trigger. But just for that reason it means that we cannot afford a single risk that the trigger will actually be pulled unnecessarily. We can afford to leave claims open and frontiers unsettled, with all the risks this implies of incidents, emotional entanglements, and war, only where the risk is balanced by a worthwhile chance of a favorable settlement by negotiation.

There is such a chance of reunifying the Soviet Zone of Germany with the West, and so we are right not to recognize the division of the zones as permanent. But there is no chance whatever of Germans reoccupying Silesia or the Sudetenland without war. In those cases, therefore, the West must cut its losses and treat the question as closed.

Coexistence also means a steady pressure of propaganda on the enemy's weak spots. It means Radio



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Free Europe, and the presence of East European democrats in the Socialist and Christian Democratic internationals. But just for that reason it also means avoiding action which will discourage the friends of democracy in Eastern Europe and help Communists to identify themselves with the Czech, or the Polish, national cause. To demand that German sovereignty should extend to the Soviet Zone as well as to the territory of the Federal Republic is politically proper; that is what people in the Soviet zone want. But how many Poles, never mind whether Communist or anti-Communist, would not resist to the last ditch a German reoccupation of Silesia?

Coexistence also calls for solidarity among the Western countries themselves. We cannot afford more mutual doubts and suspicions than are absolutely inevitable. There are plenty of people in Britain alone—I speak only for my own country—who are deeply afraid of being dragged into a third world war at the tail of a German attempt to revise existing frontiers.

Tragedy and *Documents*, I believe, represent political extremism. A democracy lets extremists talk within limits. But it is neither necessary nor right for their talk to be amplified by the resources of the German Federal budget and civil service. And I would have felt happier if *Tragedy* had not been published by Christ Unterwegs, and with the Nihil Obstat of the Vicar-General of Cologne.

Wit and Wisdom

A TREASURY OF IRISH FOLKLORE. Edited by Padraic Colum. Crown. $5.

By JOHN COURNOS

MORE than any other Western country, Ireland has maintained an exceptional purity of culture, clearly in evidence in this immense, fascinating volume. For what we see in this book is integrity of character and tradition, essentially unchanged in spite of vicissitudes of time and history. Mr. Colum, a knowledgeable man and a poet, does not merely present us with authentic examples of old folklore. He also, through a recapitulation of Irish history in recent centuries, reveals the processes of folklore in the making.

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Her name was Phoebe Mozee and she was born in Darke County, Ohio, in 1860, and she could shoot the head off a running quail by the time she was twelve years old.

Once, at the invitation of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, she knocked the ashes off a cigaret while he was holding it in his mouth.

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